

CITY OF IONIA
Planning Commission
March 14, 2007
Regular Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman John Milewski called the Regular Meeting of the City of Ionia Planning Commission to order at 4:01 PM.

ROLL CALL: Roll Call revealed Commissioners David Cook, Mark Jennings, Gordon Kelley (arrived at 4:06 PM), Lynn Lafler, John Milewski, Ted Paton and Evonne Ulmer present.

Staff present included City Manager Jason Eppler, Community Development Director Larry Harvey and Public Safety Officer Doug DeVries. Don May, Tim Johnson and several representatives of the Ionia Community Library were also present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA Chairman Milewski reviewed the agenda with the Commission. After review, it was moved by Commissioner Lafler, seconded by Commissioner Paton to approve the agenda as presented MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC HEARING Chairman Milewski opened on the Public Hearing to receive comments on a proposed amendment to the City Code regarding Neighborhood Stores. The City Manager reviewed the amendment, noted that notice of the Public Hearing was published in the Ionia *Sentinel-Standard* and posted at City Hall. He stated that no written comments on the amendment were received.

Mr. Don May stated that he reviewed the amendment and did not have any questions. He felt the amendment was consistent with what has been discussed by the Commission at past meetings.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES The Commission reviewed the minutes of the January 10, 2007 regular meeting. After review, it was moved by Commissioner Cook, seconded by Commissioner Jennings to approve the minutes as presented. MOTION CARRIED.

PUBLIC COMMENTS None.

Chairman Milewski stated that the Commission would rearrange the order of the agenda due to representatives of the Library being present.

OLD BUSINESS

Proposed Amendment to the City Code – Neighborhood Stores: Chairman Milewski noted that the next steps in the adoption process of the amendment is for the Commission to recommend to the City Council that the amendment be adopted. The Commission discussed the details of the amendment and noted its consistency with long-term goals contained in the City's Master Plan.

It was moved by Commissioner Cook, seconded by Commissioner Lafler to recommend to the City Council that the amendment to 1248.03 regarding Neighborhood Stores as a special use in the R-1 One-Family Residential Zoning District be enacted. MOTION CARRIED.

The City Manager noted that this item will be placed before the City Council for action (first reading) at its April 10, 2007 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Proposed Ionia Community Library – Adams Street – Informal Review of the Site Plan: Representatives of the Ionia Community Library were present to discuss with the Commission the site and building plans for the new Ionia Community Library. Voters in the district will be asked to approve a building and operational millage for the project at the May 8, 2007 election. Representatives discussed changes that have been made since the last millage request failed.

The Library's architects from David Milling Associates, Ann Arbor, reviewed the plans in details. Items discussed included:

- Adequate land will remain on the east side of the new building to accommodate the future addition of a truck bay to the Public Safety building.
- Storm water will be managed through the storm sewer system on Adams Street and by utilizing the drainage creek on the east and south sides of the property.
- The layout of the building will provide for future expansion.

- The driveway will be shared with the Ionia County Health Department building which will permit maximum use of parking spaces.
- A parking lot will also be built on library property located on the north side of Adams Street, directly across the street from the Health Department building.

The Library's architects noted that a series of variances will be needed to facilitate the construction of the new building (which will be requested at a future Commission meeting).

1. A variance for the driveway/drop off area on the north side of the building. The drive/drop off is located within the required front yard setback for the zoning district.
2. The parking lot proposed for the north side of Adams Street will need a variance for the east side and northwest corner which both encroach into the required setbacks for the zoning district.
3. A variance for the parking spaces on the west side of the library site due to an encroachment into the required side yard setback.
4. A variance for the encroachment of two parking spaces located at the southwest corner of the library site into the required rear yard setback.

Commissioner Paton requested an explanation of how bicycle parking will be provided on site. The architects explained that spaces are available on the west side of the proposed library.

Library Director Heidi Negal explained the future use of the Hall-Fowler building. She stated that this building will be used for the local history/genealogy location and possibly house the County law library. She explained that although some interior work will be completed, no exterior changes are proposed but for the replacement of the existing handicap ramp.

Commissioner Kelley stated that although the screening for the parking lot located on the north side of Adams Street meets the ordinance requirements, the Commission needs

to be careful not to over-screen the lot considering the alley on the east side of the site and the business on the west side.

Chairman Milewski thanked the representatives of the Library for the very thorough presentation.

Master Plan Update: The City Manager introduced Mr. Tim Johnson, Main Street Planning Company, which has been hired to assist the Commission in updating the City's Master Plan. Mr. Johnson reviewed the SWOT analysis that was completed late last fall and shared with the Commission the task before it with the update. He explained that state statute requires a community to review its Master Plan every five years. He also explained that the majority of the work that will be done as part of this project will be to update and prioritize the goals and strategies contained in the current Plan.

The Commission reviewed Chapter 5 (Action Plan) of the current Plan. Items of current priority include the following:

- Sidewalk maintenance and filling in the “gaps” in the sidewalk network. Improving the walkability of the community.
- Continue with the installation of ornamental street lights in the areas of the City void of the lights.
- Improvements to the highway corridors – both condition and appearance.
- Implement traffic calming measures at certain intersections (most City streets that intersect the highway system).
- Continue to support actions of the Fair Board and the regular use of the Free Fairgrounds.
- Improve enforcement of codes for nuisances, blight and rentals.
- Continue efforts to keep City streets clean/swept.

Mr. Johnson asked the Commission to continue to think about City wide land use and appearance goals and to be prepared to share these items at the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Kelley suggested that the efforts recommended by the Commission in the updated plan in terms of making the community more walkable should be reinforced by formal action of the City Council.

Commissioner Paton suggested a 5 year goal of improving/extending sidewalks in City neighborhoods with 20% of the City covered each year.

OLD BUSINESS

Housing Inspection Ordinances: The Commission continued its discussion regarding the City's current rental housing inspection ordinance. The Community Development Director suggested that the penalty for violating the ordinance be changed to a civil infraction to make compliance more cost effective for the City and expeditious.

Commissioners requested more time to review the sample ordinances from other communities.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Milewski adjourned the meeting at 6:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jason Eppler
City Manager/Recording Secretary